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SUBJECT: GREECE/OSCE: FM BAKOYANNIS LAYS OUT OSCE PRIORITIES

REF: A. HOVENIER/EUR-RPM E-MAIL OF 11/13/08

¶B. ATHENS 1539

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, who will be OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CIO) in 2009, laid out her priorities for the OSCE in a November 13 speech at the Greek Foreign Ministry. She emphasized the importance of OSCE cooperation with other IOs, including the UN, the EU, and NATO. She said Greece will place "the highest priority" on achieving consensus and that as CIO, Greece will be "an honest broker," and "an honest mediator." The Caucasus and Central Asia will be key priorities; Bakoyannis noted that she had recently spoken with Russian FM Lavrov on these issues, adding that Greece has consulted with Russia and "other key players" in the lead-up to its OSCE Chairmanship. Finally, she expressed Greek readiness to consider Russian and French ideas for a Summit-level meeting and "dialogue for a new security architecture in Europe." MFA Secretary General Agathocles confirmed to Ambassador Speckhard that the French are pressing Greece to host an OSCE Summit mid-2009, adding that he (personally) has misgivings. Agathocles has also confirmed that the Russians are pressing Greece on security architecture ideas. End Summary.

The Speech - Greeks Want to Build Consensus

¶12. (U) On 13 November 2008, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis gave a speech in Athens entitled "OSCE - The 2009 Greek Chairmanship-in-Office: Challenges and Priorities" (ref A). The speech was part of the MFA's "Ambassador's Forum," a periodic event hosted by the MFA on foreign policy issues, and was open to the Athens diplomatic corps, press, and think tanks. Joining Bakoyannis on the podium was OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut and the Greek Permanent Representative to the OSCE in Vienna, Ambassador Maria Marinaki.

¶13. (U) Bakoyannis noted that Greece was taking the helm of the OSCE at a "challenging" and "sensitive" time. Greece would be focused on ensuring the OSCE has "strong cooperation" with other key international organizations including NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe and "especially the UN." Bakoyannis claimed Greece had successfully completed its preparations for the Chairmanship. Greece had "only one aspiration" as CIO: to be an "honest mediator, and an honest broker." Key Greek priorities would be enhancing "respect" for the OSCE; doing more to "build consensus and convergence;" and striving for a "stronger role" for the OSCE in early warning, crisis prevention and management, and post-crisis management and rehabilitation.

Central Asia and the Caucasus

¶ 14. (U) Bakoyannis said Greece planned to devote "special attention" to the Caucasus and Central Asia and will work diligently on "the day after" in Georgia. Bakoyannis asserted that as CIO, Greece needed to ensure respect for two key principles: "protection of ethnic communities and national minorities," and "respect for territorial integrity." Bakoyannis announced she will travel to the region shortly after becoming CIO. She noted that she had recently met with the Georgian Foreign Minister in Athens (ref B) and spoken with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov by phone.

¶ 15. (C) Comment: Greek MFA sources tell us that the Russians have been actively engaging with Secretary General Agathocles, OSCE Task Force head Kalantzianos, and others to press their OSCE-related agenda. Embassy Athens is also in frequent contact with these same interlocutors. End Comment.

Security Architecture and Possible Summit

¶ 16. (U) Bakoyannis said the Georgia crisis had "overthrown the view of security in the Eurasian region," and "could trigger a debate on a new global security architecture," as NATO evolved and Russia clarified its vision. France and Russia had both argued for such a debate. Whether this issue would reach the level of a Summit would only become apparent along the way. The December 2008 OSCE Helsinki Ministerial

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should agree on a "more clear direction," and Greece was "open" to "dialogue for a new security architecture in Europe." Greece was also ready to host any meeting agreed upon by OSCE member states.

¶ 17. (C) Comment: MFA Secretary General Agathocles recently told Ambassador Speckhard that France is "pushing hard" for Greece to host an OSCE Summit in mid-2008; the French DCM in Athens confirmed that Paris has asked the Greeks to be ready to host a Summit in mid-2008. Agathocles said he is "nervous" about this idea, as there may not be sufficient time to prepare logistically, and it is not clear what any deliverables might be. Agathocles intimated that Greece does not want to be caught in the middle as Russia pushes its "security architecture" ideas, adding that the Russians have been in several times to press on the issue. Agathocles said that the Greek response has been to advise the Russians to give the new U.S. administration some time. End Comment.

Other OSCE Desiderata

¶ 18. (U) Bakoyannis said Greece supported further OSCE outreach to Asia and the Mediterranean. It wanted to "enhance the OSCE," as the evolution from a "loose Cold War dialogue" to an "organization" continued. In this regard, Greece expected to see "tangible progress" on the OSCE's legal personality. Regarding the OSCE budget, it needed to respond to "growing requirements and needs." Member states must "give the resources necessary to make it effective." Bakoyannis concluded her speech with a pitch to Greek nationals to apply for OSCE jobs by noting that Greece is underrepresented in the Secretariat and Field Missions. After the speech, the head of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs OSCE Task force, Ambassador Nicolaos Kalantzianos, told the group that Greece's "specific priorities and program" would be unveiled by the Foreign Minister at a January 15 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council.

¶ 19. (U) OSCE Secretary General de Brichambaut also spoke, highlighting the importance of the CIO and expressing

readiness to work with Greece. De Brichambaut mentioned a recent OSCE meeting in Kabul and OSCE decisions to work on border security, policing and drug trafficking with Afghanistan. Greek OSCE PermRep Marinaki spoke at length, reiterating that the Greek Chairmanship's priorities will be "respect for the OSCE's objectives, resolving disputes, and pursuit of the highest levels of consensus." Marinaki added that Greece placed the "highest importance" on EU cohesion in the OSCE, and made a passing comment that Greece will take very seriously the CIO's "responsibilities" vis-a-vis extra-budgetary contributions. She did not specify what she thought those responsibilities were, or how Greece would fulfill them.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) We found FM Bakoyannis' speech to be short on specifics of Greek OSCE plans. Suggestions by Bakoyannis that Greece would seek to build consensus at the OSCE between the U.S. and Russia were disquieting, but not surprising. We have reiterated to Greek interlocutors that certain areas of OSCE work -- such as ODIHR's elections-related activities -- are not negotiable but are, rather, fundamental to the institution and its precepts. We will continue to emphasize these points, as well as the need to proceed very carefully and in full consultation with the United States on any initiatives related to a Summit or consideration of Russian security architecture ideas. End Comment.

SPECKHARD